

A work session of the Astoria Common Council was held at the above place at the hour of 4:30 pm.

Councilors Present: Brownson, Herman, Rocka, West, and Mayor Jones.

Councilors Excused: None

Staff Present: City Manager Estes, Finance Director Brooks. The meeting is recorded and will be transcribed by ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

#### **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

Mayor Jones and City Manager Estes provided details to new Councilors Herman and Rocka on the general timeline for City Council meetings throughout the year and explained the annual goal setting process.

#### **PRESENTATION FROM THE ASTORIA WARRENTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Packets containing an outline of the presentation and supporting documents were made available to the Councilors and the public.

David Reid, Executive Director, and Regina Willkie, Assistant Director, Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce, briefly introduced themselves. Mr. Reid, Ms. Willkie, City Manager Estes, and Director Brooks gave a presentation on the Chamber of Commerce, the Astoria Visitor's Center, and the Lower Columbia Tourism Committee (LCTC), the Chamber's efforts to help Astoria achieve its goals, and the finances that impact the Chamber's partnership with Astoria. Highlights of the presentation and conversation among the Councilors were as follows:

- Chamber of Commerce – The history, purpose and goals of the Chamber were reviewed. The presentation also included details of the Chamber's current membership profile, funding sources, use of funds, fundraisers and events.
  - Community organizations sometimes make the Chamber aware of events, but the Chamber would like more data so they can help support other local organizations.
- Visitor Center – The goals and purpose of the Visitor Center were reviewed. The presentation also reviewed how appropriate tourist activities were encouraged, and statistics on visitors and staffing. The Visitor Center is operated by Chamber through an agreement with the City and is funded by transient lodging taxes.
  - Councilors discussed the allocation and use of transient lodging taxes. Staff provided details on the laws that regulate use of the funds, the pros and cons of those laws, and the controversy about how to apply those laws.
- Mr. Reid presented statistics from the Employment Department on tourism jobs held by residents, which indicated that tourism employees can afford to live in Astoria. He confirmed the statistics did not include the Coast Guard, which was a large part of Astoria's population. Councilor Rocka asked that the Chamber work with the City to provide lodging for tourism employees.
- Lower Columbia Tourism Committee – The presentation included the history of the committee and an overview of the membership, current projects, programs, initiatives, and partnerships. Ms. Wilkie invited the Councilors to attend the Committee's next meeting on March 14<sup>th</sup> to hear mid-year campaign reports.
- Public transportation should also support tourism. While public transportation is improving, it is cumbersome to get from the airport to Astoria. However, public transportation agencies are working on ways to make travel easier by synchronizing schedules and implementing electronic ticketing.
- The Chamber coordinates with cruise ship hosts, but more data on passengers would be helpful. Councilor Rocka was concerned about passengers with money shopping for second homes while they visit Astoria. Councilor West heard mixed comments from downtown retailers about how much passengers shop. Some shops prefer to be closed on cruise ship days, but she believed the restaurants probably did better.
- Councilor Rocka said there was nothing in Uniontown to let visitors know the history of ballast rocks and boiler. City Manager Estes described Staffs efforts to fund signage projects over the years.

- Councilor Rocka stated he wanted to address pedestrian safety on Marine Drive in the Urban Core Code amendments. Councilor Brownson noted that possibly as part of the Uniontown Reborn Project, the City could work with Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to reconfigure Marine Drive between the Doughboy Monument and 8<sup>th</sup> Street.
- The Chamber was working towards assisting businesses and organizations with conference planning by creating a virtual conference center at [www.meetastoria.com](http://www.meetastoria.com).

Mr. Reid invited to Councilors to the March 14<sup>th</sup> LCTC meeting, the North Coast Tourism Studio on Jan 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, and the Chamber's annual meeting and banquet on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Email invites would be sent to Staff.

**ADJOURNMENT**

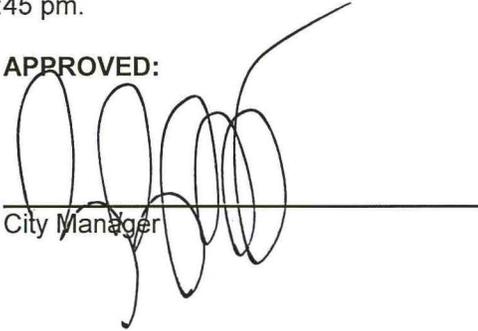
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

**ATTEST:**



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Finance Director

**APPROVED:**



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City Manager